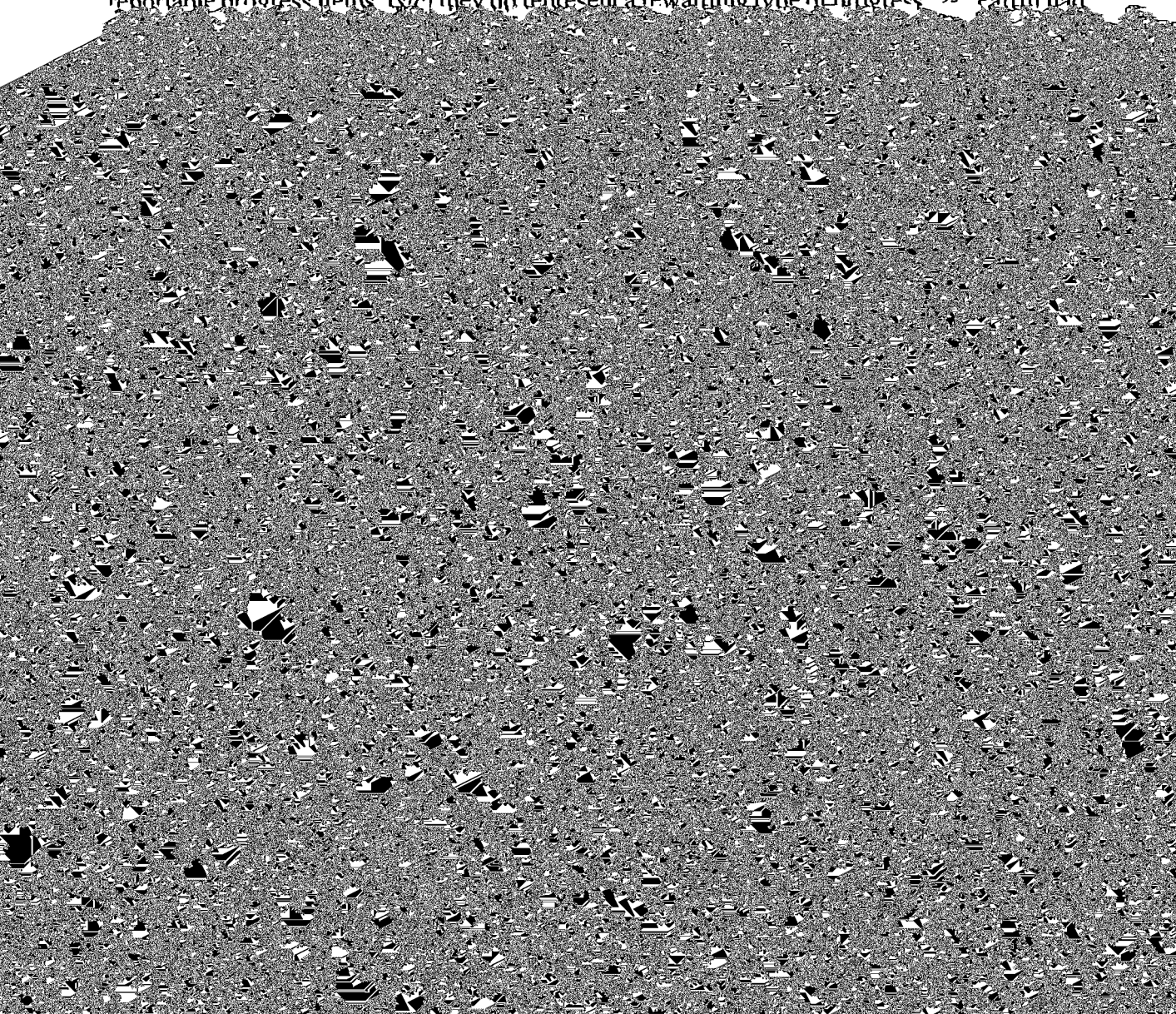


‘their’ land. Through interpreters, I am beginning to know some of their problems, their feelings, and generally their needs and desires. Thank God, thank you and thank the Navajo people for allowing me this opportunity to learn something about living and about the world we live in.”<sup>91</sup> Parrill’s enthusiasm soon waned somewhat as bureaucratic reorganization within the Navajo Nation stripped the budget and staff for natural resources and provided stumbling blocks to the final referendums on district formation.<sup>92</sup> Despite these problems, once the bureaucratic upheaval had settled, the process continued to move forward. By January 1981, Parrill reported “everywhere we go and everyone we come in contact with is truly concerned about a conservation program....Although interest, attitude, and concern are not reportable progress items: [sic] they do represent a rewarding type of progress.”<sup>93</sup> Parrill had




With the resumption of their work on the reservations, the SCS found that the condi-

tion of the reservations was poor. The National Indian Land Council, formed in 1920,

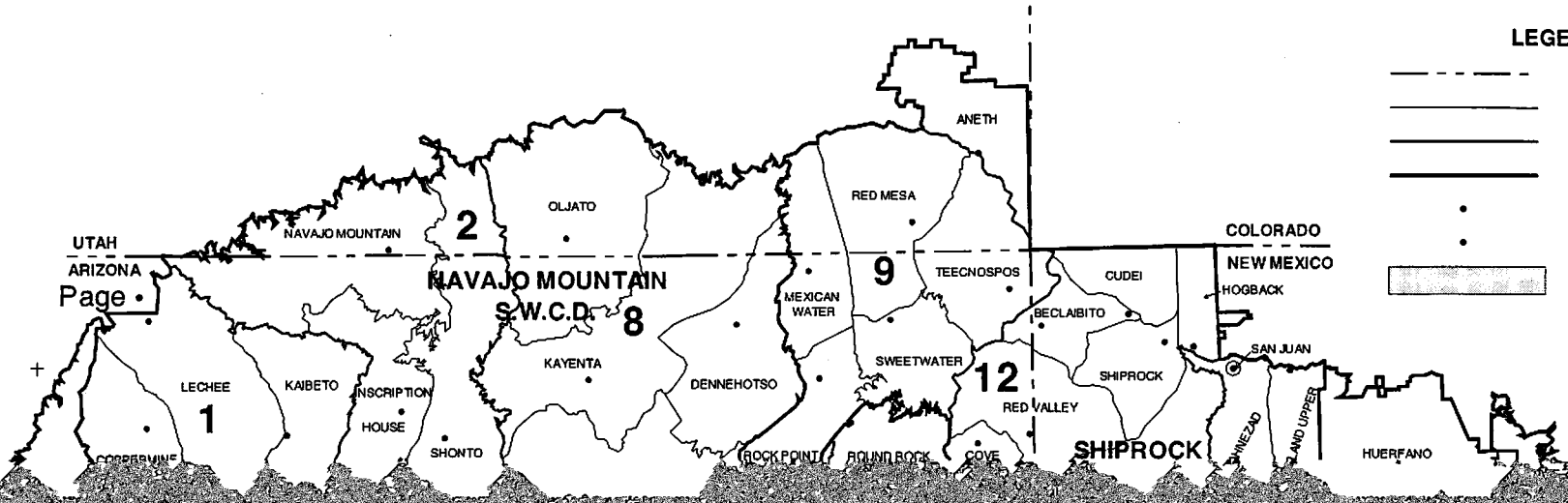


LEGEND

45

- State Line
- Chapter Boundary
- Grazing District Boundary
- SWCD Boundary
- Off - Reservation Comm.
- Chapter House
-  Bennet Freeze Area

107°30'  
+ 36°45'



## Conservation and Culture

Worsening conditions bred frustrations within the Navajo Nation.<sup>98</sup> SCS programs, though helpful, appeared inadequate to meet the challenges that the conditions on the Reservation posed. This was partially because the SCS relationship with the Navajo Nation was complicated by a number of factors, most significant among these was the lack of coordination and partnership between the various Federal agencies operating (often at odds) on the Navajo Nation. There were also ongoing difficulties in overcoming the Navajo distrust of Federal programs and a basic lack of information on SCS programs.<sup>99</sup> At the same time, the needs of the Navajo Nation went far beyond what the SCS was able to provide. Conservation education, fencing, range management, dam construction, and erosion control were ineffective without a comprehensive approach to solving the human problems of the Navajo Nation.

In 1994, a little more than a decade after the first report on Navajo resource use, the Navajo Nation compiled the *Navajo Nation Rural Development 2000 Plan*, an extensive study of conditions on the reservation and an ambitious plan for their improvement.<sup>100</sup> According to the study, things had improved little if at all since the mid-1980s: unemployment rates ranged seasonally from 36% to 50%; average per capita income was \$4106; 56% of the

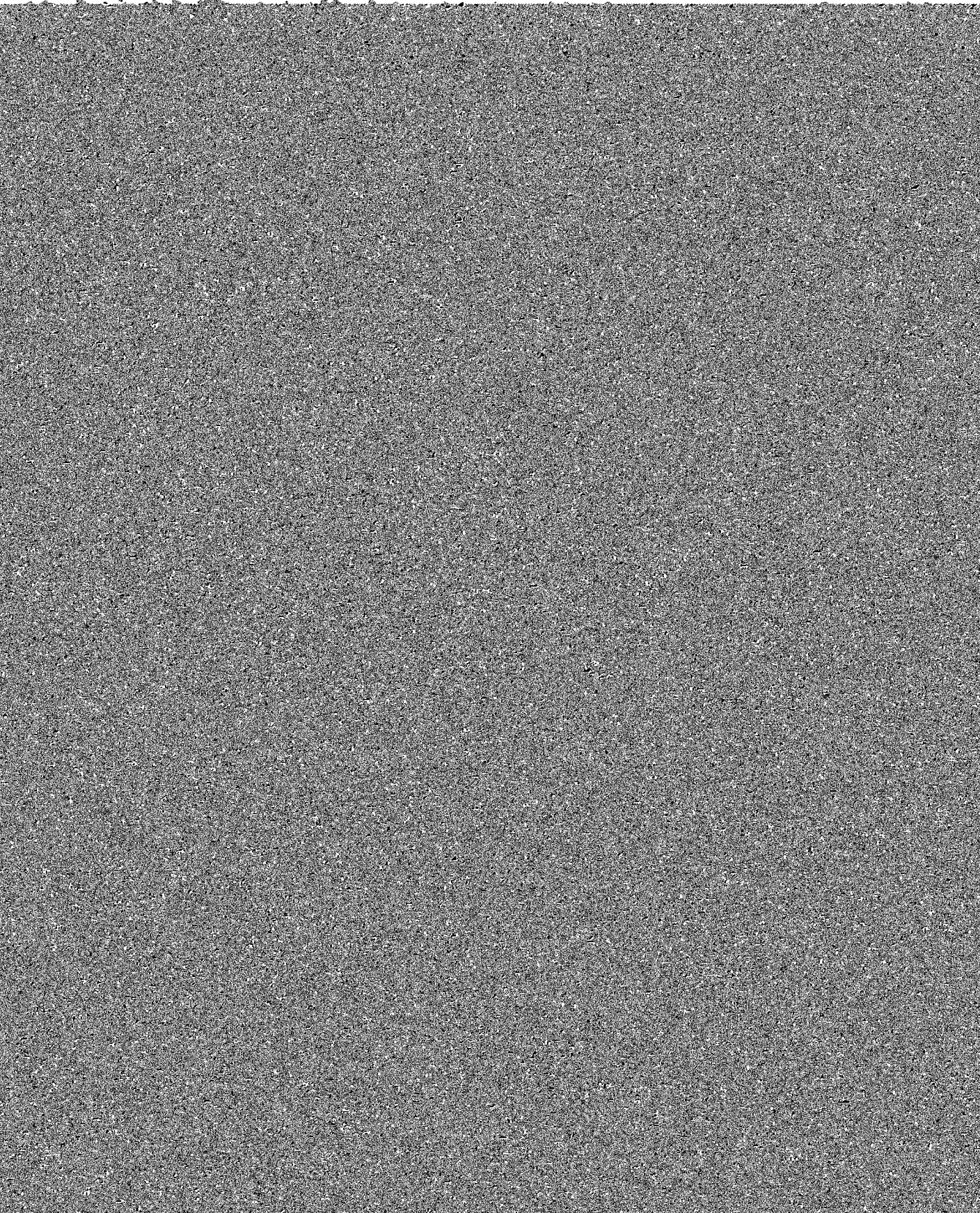
population lived below the poverty line; three-quarters of the population went without plumbing, kitchens, and/or telephones. The entire reservation had only 18,000 miles of paved road, only three banks, and insufficient local schools, public buildings, and medical facilities. The Navajo Nation's population was living in conditions one normally associates with the poorest nations of the third world, not with late twentieth century America.

The report was important because in it the Navajo performed the type of survey and planning for themselves that TC-BIA had performed in the 1930s. However, because this was a self-diagnosis, it had less of the type of cultural and political bias that complicated early SCS planning and implementation of works on tribal lands, where Federal objectives and priorities were inflicted on the Indian tribes without consideration of their own desires. However, the plan was not free from controversy, due to the diversity of perspectives on development and land use within the Navajo Nation itself. The *Development 2000* plan called for a broad, joint development program by USDA and the Navajo Nation which would provide an integrated approach to addressing the persistent deficiencies in Navajo infrastructure. The SCS and its assistance in improving and managing the potentially rich Navajo natural resource base was the central component. According to the plan, over the previous three years, the Navajo Nation had begun "to develop and institute a *culturally-based*, watershed/ecosystem approach to comprehensive natural resources conservation, restoration and management...working closely with the USDA Soil Conservation Service..."<sup>101</sup> The Navajo Nation was by no means asking for a one-sided commitment from the SCS for developing its natural resources. For the fiscal year 1994, the Navajo Nation invested \$7,498,000 in conservation projects. This amount was by far the largest single component of the Nation's budget





Besides the problem of continuity and the need for infrastructural development, there



culture is opposed to the type of land division represented by fencing. The fence, in Navajo society, is a symbol of the exclusion of neighbors, community, and even family that is completely unacceptable to most people. In the past few years, local resistance to fencing has been so intense as to elicit credible death threats against BIA personnel involved in fencing projects. Alternative solutions that would be more culturally acceptable have not been sought.<sup>104</sup> This failure on the part of the SCS is attributable to a continued lack of sensitivity to and awareness of the importance of the Navajo belief system and its relationship to the land. The continued attempts to impose fencing on the reservation have slowed the conservation of the range and increased tensions between SCS and the Navajo.

While range management continues to be a problem on the reservation, other projects have progressed. One example of the integrated projects being developed in the Navajo



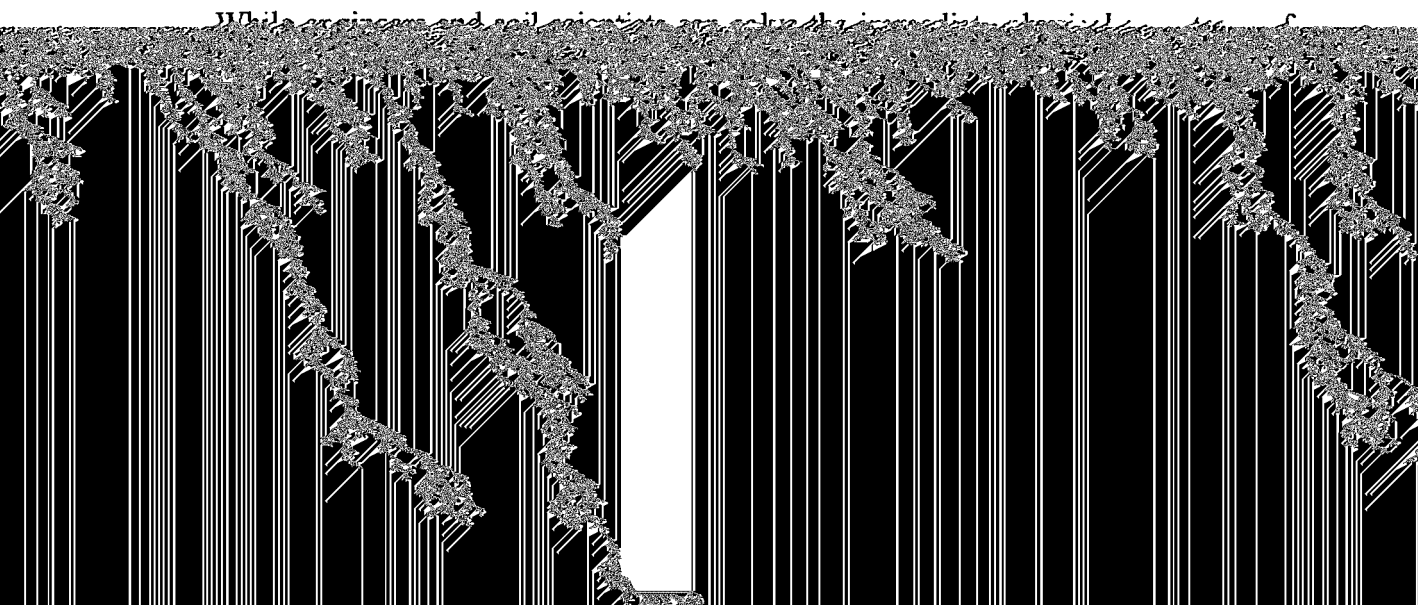
## Conservation and Culture

with the help of the SCS, to address the problems of local farmers trying to earn a living on small farms at high altitudes with limited resources, poor soils, and a short, dry growing season. The Director of the Center began collecting American Indian seed in the mid-



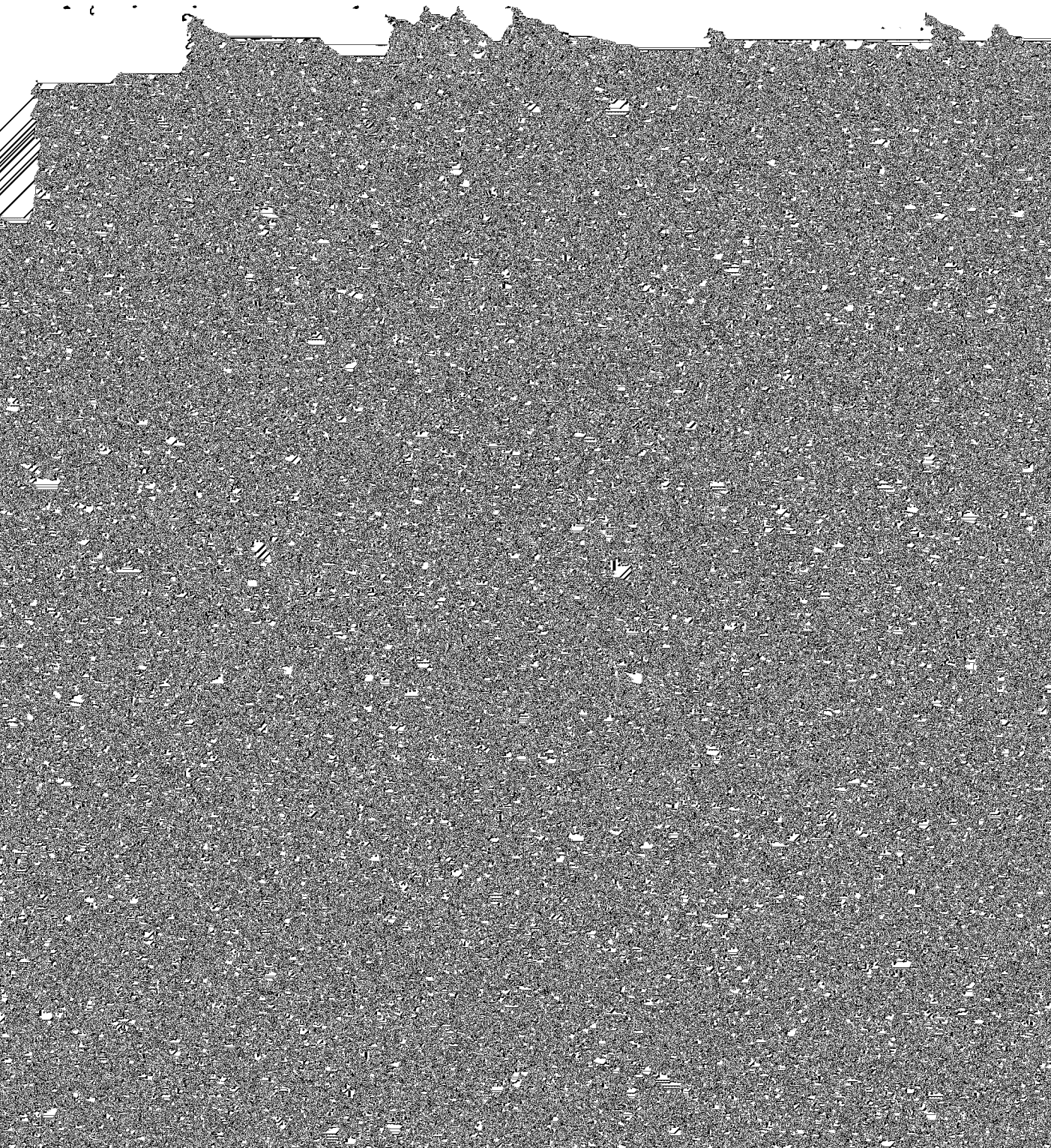
## CONCLUSION: WHY CULTURE COUNTS

Though this paper studied only the Southwest, the same problems of cultural misapprehension persist throughout the country.<sup>106</sup> Even as legislation and presidential proclamations changed the legal relationship of the American Indian tribes to the Federal Government and its agencies, increased legal autonomy for the tribes, and mandated access to Federal rural improvement programs, basic cultural and social issues continued to shape the quality and quantity of aid that American Indians received. Nominally physically accessible field offices staffed with personnel with little regard for or knowledge about the American Indian populations they are there to serve are of little use. Conservation programs designed without regard for the beliefs and practices of the human population occupying the land are fruitless at best, and at worst, increase the level of mistrust and misunderstanding that has historically plagued Federal Government-American Indian relations. All of the good intentions of the NRCS and its staff will be for naught if the information they have does not reach the American Indians on the reservations, if the tribal members do not feel comfortable with or capable of approaching the NRCS for assistance, if NRCS programs are not appropriate for the diverse needs of the many American Indian tribes and groups living in the U. S..



## Conservation and Culture

those symptoms. Nor can they design ways to combat those problems in order to overcome the problems of erosion, overgrazing, deforestation, and siltation. These tasks fall to two groups of people, the tribal members on the reservation and social scientists. The task of the former is to take responsibility for the land in their keeping, and be advocates for its improvement and for their own right to Federal assistance. The task of the latter is two fold: 1) to





*Appendix A: Human Dependency and Economic Studies Conducted by  
TC-BIA, 1935-1939*

---

Region 7

---

*Human Dependency and Economic Survey, Lower Brule Indian  
Reservation, South Dakota, 1938. 114 pp. 1938.*

*Economic Reconnaissance, Pine Ridge Indian Reservation, South Dakota,  
1938. 1939*

Wind River Reservation, Wyoming

*Economy of the Wind River Indian Reservation, Wyoming. 14 pp. 1938.*

*History and Present Status of Irrigation and Crop Production, Wind River  
Indian Reservation, Wyoming. 32 pp. 1938.*

*History and Social Organization of the Indians of the Wind River  
Reservation, Wyoming. 138 pp. 1938.*

*Land Tenure and Land Use, Wind River Indian Reservation, Wyoming. 22  
pp. 1938.*

*Livestock Economy of the Wind River Indian Reservation, Wyoming. 44  
pp. 1938.*

Region 8

---

*Socio-Economic Report on the Gila River (Pima) Indian Reservation*

Region 9

---

*Preliminary Report, Human Dependency and Economic Surveys, Fort Hall Indian Reservation, Idaho, 1937-1938.* 227 pp. 1939.

Region 10

---

*Human Dependency and Economic Survey, Sacramento Indian Jurisdiction, California, 1936.* 100 pp. 1939.

*Nye County Shoshone Project, Nevada.* 70 pp. 1937.

*Ruby Valley Purchase Project, Odger Ranch, Land Utilization Study, Nevada.* 12 pp. 1937.

*South Fork and Ruby Valley Projects for Shoshones of Northeastern, Nevada.* 129 pp. 1937.

*Survey of the Beatty-Pahrump Area Located in Southwestern Nevada.* 26 pp. 1937.

*Survey of the Shoshones and Paiutes, Fallon Indian Reservation, Nevada* 48 pp. 1937.

*Washoe Report for Carson Valley Washoes, Nevada and California.* 121 pp. 1937.

*Yerington Project for Smith and Mason Valley Paiutes, Lyon County, Nevada.* 40 pp. 1937.

---

Human dependency studies were also conducted by the Human Dependency team in Region 8 under the direction of Eshref Shevky. Many of these studies were issued as Regional Bulletins and part of the Conservation Economics Series beginning in 1935. Following are a list of some of those studies which I was able to obtain. There are many more, most of which deal with populations other than the American Indians.



## Conservation and Culture

*Proposals for the Santa Cruz Area.* Regional Bulletin no. 28; Conservation Economics Series no. 1; SCS Region 8, Albuquerque, NM, July 1935.

*Preliminary Report on Concho.* Regional Bulletin no. 29; Conservation Economics Series No. 2; November 1935.

*The Importance of Various Types of Income on the Navajo Reservation.* Regional Bulletin no. 30; Conservation Economics Series no. 3; January 1936.

*Sociological Survey of the Navajo Reservation: Statement of Purpose.* Regional Bulletin no. 32; Conservation Economics Series no. 5 May 1936

Appendix B: Suggested Reading for NRCS Field Staff

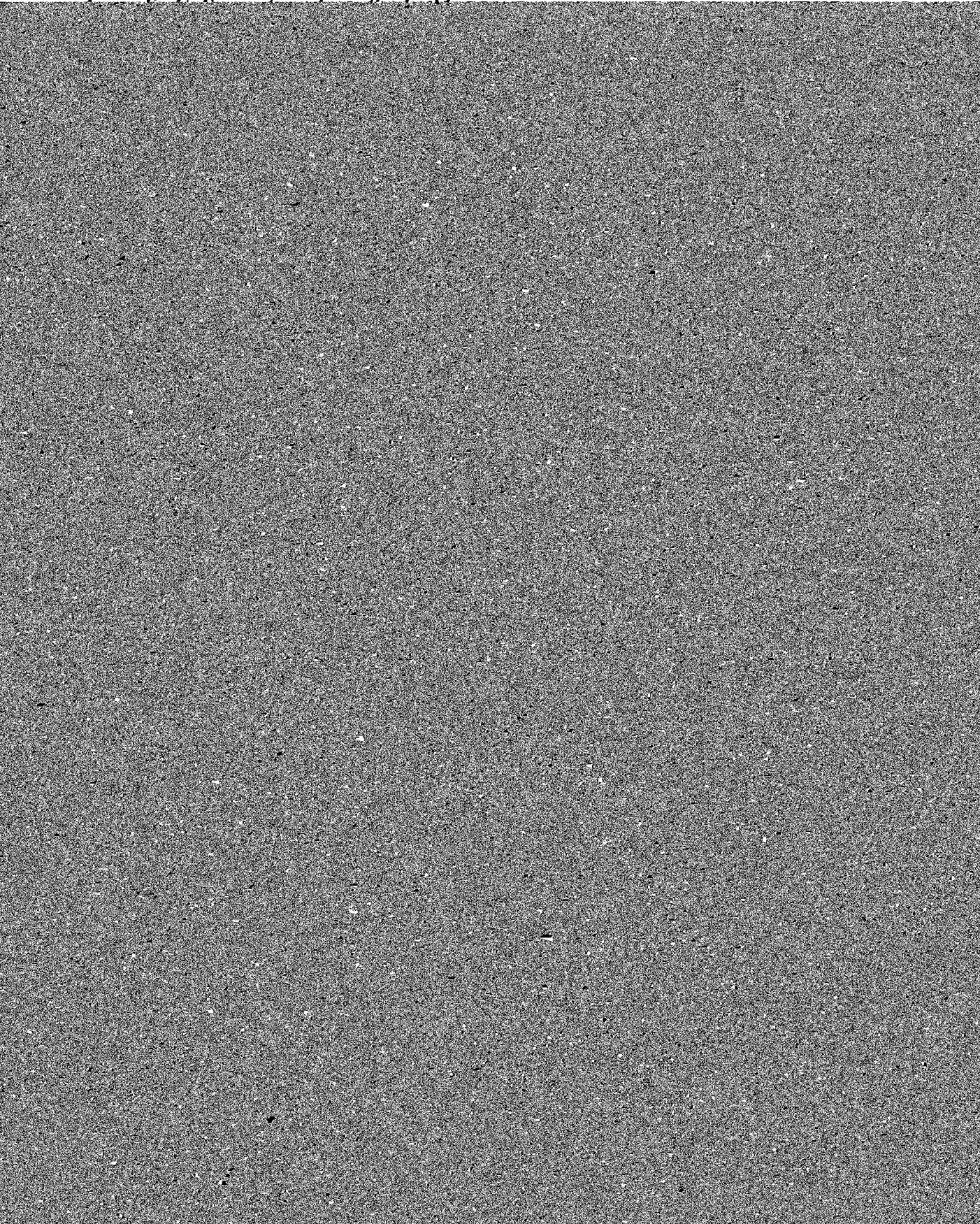
---

(These are general works. Full citations may be found in the bibliography.)

- A. T. Andersen, *Nations within a Nation: The American Indian and the Government of the U. S.*.
- Council of State Governments, *Indian Rights and Claims: Environmental Management Considerations for the State*, 1977.
- Douglas Hurt, *Indian Agriculture in America: Prehistory to the Present*, 1987.
- Solon Kimball and John Provinse, "Land Use Management: The Navajo Reservation," in Walter Goldschmidt, ed. *The Uses of Anthropology*, 1979.
- Kimball and Provinse, "Navajo Social Organization in Land Use Planning," *Applied Anthropology* 1(September 1942): 18-25.
- Lawrence Kinney, *A Continent Lost—A Civilization Won: Indian Land Tenure in America*, 1937.
- Gary Libecap and Ronald Johnson, "Legislating the Commons: The Navajo Tribal Council and the Navajo Range." *Economic Inquiry* 18 (January 1980): 69-86.
- Marjorie Snodgrass, *Economic Development of American Indians and Eskimos, 1930-1967: A Bibliography*, 1968.
- Edward Spicer, *Human Problems and Technological Change: A Casebook*, 1952.
- Richard White, *The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment and Social Change Among the Choctaws, Pawnees and Navajo*, 1983.
- USDA, SCS, Frank Clearfield, National Sociologist, *Working More Effectively with American Indian: Workshop Proceedings, march 7-10, 1988, Phoenix, Arizona*, (Washington DC: USGPO, 1990).
- USDA, Office of Information, Office of InterGovernmental Affairs, *Agricultural Programs and Activities for American Indians* (USGPO, 1986).

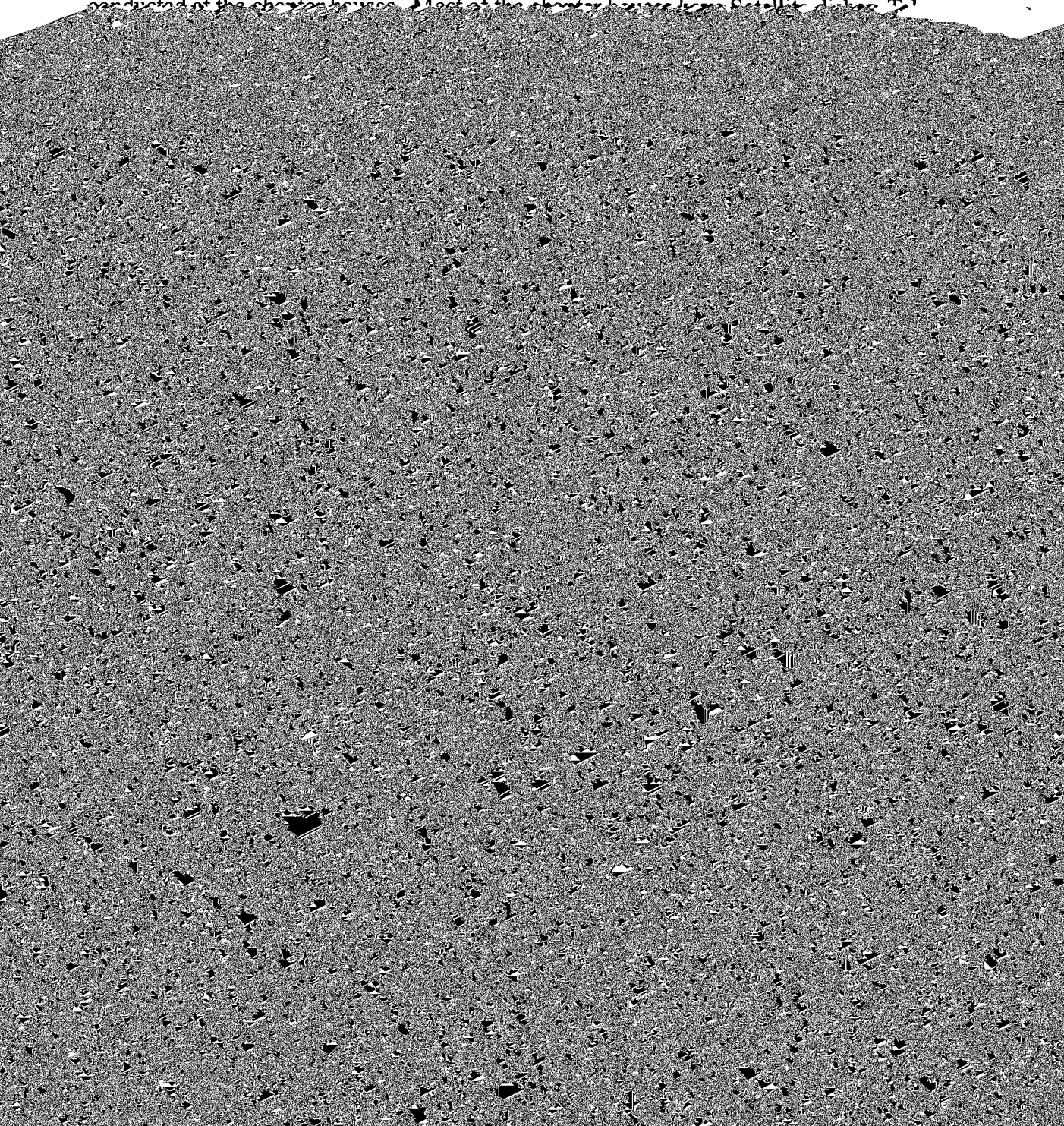


Journal of Conservation and Culture





- NRCS needs to **increase the amount and effectiveness of its outreach** to American Indian communities.
- NRCS field offices working with Indian communities and reservations need to be able to provide **alternative information sources** to the Indian communities. **Videos**, in the language of the reservation, explaining NRCS programs available on the reservations would be of great benefit. For example, on the Navajo Reservation, many of the people do not have electricity, phones or direct mail service, many do not have reliable transportation. Most of their business (mail pickup, phone messages, community meetings) are conducted at the checker houses. Most of the checker houses have Satellite dishes. To





### Bibliography

---

#### PUBLIC RECORDS

Records of the Soil Conservation Service, Record Group 114. National Archives II, College Park, MD.

Records of the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Record Group 75. National Archives, Washington DC.

General Correspondence of the Secretary of Agriculture, Record Group 16. Washington National Records Center, Suitland, MD.

Files of the American Indian Coordinator, Headquarters, Natural Resources Conservation Service, USDA, Washington, DC.

Files of the American Indian Coordinator, Southwest Region, NRCS, Arizona State Office, Phoenix, AZ.

#### INTERVIEWS

Charmichael, Steve. Former American Indian Coordinator, Southwest Region, Soil Conservation Service.

Sellers, Doug. Indian Liaison, Soil Conservation Service, 1984-1989. Telephone interview, August 25, 1995.

Seronde, Jacques. Former Director, Agricultural Resources, Navajo Nation.

#### BOOKS AND PERIODICALS

Anders, Gary. "Theories of Underdevelopment and the American Indian." *Journal of Economic Issues* 14, 3(September 1980): 681-701.

Andersen, A. T. *Nations Within a Nation: The American Indian and the Government of the U. S.* [U.S. Congress] American Indian Policy Review Committee/Union Carbide Corporation, 1976.

Arizona, Office of the Governor. Office of Economic Planning and Development. *Critical Issues in Indian-State Relations*. Phoenix, 1981.

Boyce, George Arthur. *Primer of Navajo economic problems*. Window Rock Arizona: U. S. Department of the Interior, Office of Indian Affairs, Navajo Service, 1942.

Calkins, Hugh G., Regional Conservator, USDA, SCS. *Proposals for the Santa Cruz Area*. Regional Bulletin No. 28; Conservation Economics Series No. 1; Soil Conservation Service, Region 8. Albuquerque, NM, July 1935.

\_\_\_\_\_. *Preliminary Report on Concho*. Regional Bulletin No. 29; Conservation Economics Series No. 2, November 1935.





## Conservation and Culture

Hill, W. W. *The Agricultural and Hunting Methods of the Navajo Indians*. New Haven, CT: Published for the Department of Anthropology, Yale University by Yale University Press; and London: Humphrey Milford, Oxford University Press, 1938.

Hurt, R. Douglas. *Indian Agriculture in America: Prehistory to the Present*. Lawrence, KN: The University Press of Kansas, 1987.

Kelly, Lawrence. "Anthropology and Anthropologists in the Indian New Deal." *Journal of the History of the Behavioral Sciences* 16 (1980): 6-24.

\_\_\_\_\_. "Anthropology in the Soil Conservation Service." In *The History of Soil and Water Conservation*. Douglas Helms and Susan Flander, editors. Washington, DC:



Punce, A.C. "Some Economic and Social Problems of Soil Conservation." U.S. Soil Conservation Service. *Soil Conservation* 5, 4 (October 1939): 73-76, 82.

Ruffing, Lorraine Turner. "Navajo Economic Development Subject to Cultural Constraints." *Economic Development and Cultural Change* 24(April 1976): 611-621.

Sasaki, Tom. "Agricultural Practices Among the Navaho [sic] Indians of New Mexico." in Spicer, *Human Problems in Technological Change*, pp. 97-112.

Snodgrass, Marjorie P., ed. *Economic Development of American Indians and Eskimos, 1930-1967: A Bibliography*. U.S. Department of the Interior. Bureau of Indian Affairs. Departmental



- \_\_\_\_\_. *Navajo District Annual Report, 1937-1938*. Soil Conservation Service, Region 8, 1938.
- \_\_\_\_\_. *Tewa Basin Study, 1935*. Volume I: *The Indian Pueblos*. Volume II: *Spanish-American Villages*. Soil Conservation Service, Southwest Region, Albuquerque, NM, April, 1939.
- U. S. Department of the Interior. Office of Indian Affairs. Technical Cooperation—Bureau of Indian Affairs, Soil Conservation Service, USDA. *Human Dependency Survey, Sacramento, California, Indian Jurisdiction, 1936*. Denver, May 1939.
- U. S., Navajo Soil and Water Conservation Experiment Stations, Mexican Springs, NM *Soil and water conservation investigations; progress report 1934-1939*. Washington, DC, 1941.
- Weber, Anslem. *The Navajo Indians: a statement of facts*. St. Michaels (?), Arizona, 1914.
- White, Richard. *The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment and Social Change Among the Choctaws, Pawnees and Navajo*. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1983.

---

*A*

---

*G*

Allotment Act 1

Grading districts 22



---

### O

Overgrazing, 2, 3, 22, 23, 41, 49

---

### P

Papago, 7, 20

Parker Valley Soil and Water Conservation District, iv, 30, 32

Parrill, Frank, 38, 39, 40

Pearmain, John, 14, 20

Progressive Era, 1

Project for Technical Assistance to the Office of Indian Affairs, 9

Provinse, John, 13, 23, 24, 29

Pueblo Indians, 7

---

### R

Rancherias, 20, 22, 38

Resettlement Administration, 22

Round Valley Reservation, 21

---

### S

Sacramento, California, 20, 21

Santa Cruz, 19

Seasonal labor, 22

Shevky, Eshref, 13, 17, 26, 27

Shiprock SWCD, 40

Social studies, 11

Socio-economic studies, 12, 25

Socio-Economic Survey, 8, 12, 14, 25. *See* Human Dependency Survey

Sociological Survey of the Navajo Reservation, 16

Soil Erosion Service, 7, 8

Southwest, 1, 2, 3, 8, 16, 35

Spicer, Edward, 23

Stock reduction program, 2

Stock-raising, 2

Sustainable Native Agriculture Center, 46

---

### T

Technical Cooperation-Bureau of Indian Affairs, 1, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 25, 26, 27, 30, 44

Tenant farming, 22

Tewa Basin Study, 17, 18

---

### U

Underhill, Ruth, 26

---

### W

White, Max, 3, 8, 11, 21

Woehlke, Walter, 13, 14, 15, 25